

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



NEWS RELEASE

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Davis Statement on Securing Contractor Information Systems

Washington, D.C. – Government Reform Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA) issued the following statement today on the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report titled, *GAO-05-362 Information Security; Improving Oversight of Access to Federal Systems and Data by Contractors Can Reduce Risk*:

“The federal government is dependent on information technology services and systems provided by outside contractors. While these contractor systems undoubtedly contribute to the effectiveness of the federal government, they are potential Trojan horses for cyber-attacks unless more is done. Given the interconnectivity of systems across cyberspace, all it takes is one weak link to break the chain.

“The requirements of the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) apply to contractor-provided systems; therefore, agencies are required to develop and implement policies and procedures for overseeing their contractor-provided systems. Despite these safeguards, contractor access to federal data systems presents a board range of security risks that the government must confront.

“According to the GAO report, agencies are not doing enough. While most agencies use contract language to outline security requirements for contractors, agencies do not reference critical FISMA requirements in the language. Most agencies have information security policies in place for contractors; however, only a fraction of them address oversight. In addition, only some agencies use the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) self-assessment tool to help measure the status of contractors providing IT systems.

“The Committee will examine the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)’s efforts to update the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) to include stricter information security requirements in government contracts. OMB needs to complete this important step to secure the

government's systems. GAO recommends addressing the discrepancies in data submitted to OMB by agencies and Inspectors General about information security oversight of contractors. This could be achieved by including additional IG reporting requirements in the FISMA guidance. While the FISMA process provides the agencies with a strong management framework, it is not a panacea; there may be a need for amendments to facilitate implementation of the security concepts that drive FISMA. The Committee would also be supportive of an effort by NIST to develop comprehensive guidance for federal agencies to help them develop information security policies for contractor-provided systems and other organizations that possess federal information or have access to federal information systems."

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